

Item No. 11.1.10
Halifax Regional Council
December 10, 2013

TO: Mayor Savage and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY:

Original signed by



Richard Butts, Chief Administrative Officer

Original Signed by



Mike Labrecque, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: November 18, 2013

SUBJECT: **Halifax Explosion 100th Anniversary**

ORIGIN

July 30, 2013 – Motion approved by Regional Council requesting a staff report on the establishment of a non-profit society to plan the commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the Halifax Explosion in 2017. The report is to include the terms of reference for the society and define the relationship between HRM and the society.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

HRM Charter (2008) – s.79(1)(av) to (vii) respecting grants to non-profit organizations and s.70(1) funding to business improvement districts; HRM Marketing Levy Act (2001) with respect to By-law H-400 and Marketing Levy Special Events Reserve Business Case (Revised 2012).

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Regional Council convene an ad hoc advisory committee to provide input into the development and implementation of a municipal *Halifax Explosion 100th Anniversary Commemoration Plan 2017* with the committee's terms of reference approved by the HRM Community Planning & Economic Development Standing Committee.

BACKGROUND

The Halifax Explosion is an iconic event that has an extensive and enduring social impact. Although provincial and federal governments have contributed to preserving the history of this event, the principle legacy is distinctly municipal.

Regional Council directed staff to present a report on the establishment of a non-profit society to plan the commemoration of the 100th Anniversary of the Explosion. Through the work to respond to that motion, it was determined that the formation of a non-profit society to plan HRM's commemoration of the 100th Anniversary of the Halifax Explosion is not the best course of action. In the alternative, an ad hoc advisory committee is recommended to coordinate municipal initiatives. It is anticipated a municipal plan would be developed to encompass three programming streams:

- Municipal capital projects specific to the Halifax Explosion centennial;
- Civic commemorative event(s);
- Municipal grants to registered non-profit organizations.

DISCUSSION

1. Rationale for Not Recommending the Formation of a Non-Profit Society

The formation of a non-profit society by the Municipality is not recommended because there could be a perceived conflict of interest if that same organization were to subsequently apply for municipal financial assistance. The issue might be particularly sensitive if the organization was to participate in an open call for applications and evaluation was merit-based. The society might have an expectation of funding given HRM's role in initiating its formation while other applicants might perceive, fairly or otherwise, that preferential consideration may be given to a society of HRM's own devise. If Council chooses to proceed with the formation of a non-profit society, HRM's participation should be minimal so as to avoid any perceived conflict of interest. As such, the relationship between HRM and the society would need to be no different from any other registered non-profit group.

If Council elects to pursue the formation of a non-profit society, HRM could provide assistance in determining the public interest and facilitate its development but in an arms-length relationship that does not constitute or infer any special consideration with respect to municipal funding. Although non-profit organizations have been incorporated for the purpose of research, interpretation or commemoration of an historic event/disaster¹, conventional practice would see prospective members of a society establish their mission, write their articles of incorporation, elect a Board of Directors, and appoint officers. As such, if such a society were to be incorporated it would be planning its own activities and not devising a plan for HRM to fund and/or execute.

¹ S.S Atlantic Heritage Park Society, the Titanic Society of Atlantic Canada, and the Titanic 100 Society.

2. Development of a Municipal Commemorative Program

The formation of an ad hoc advisory committee is recommended to enable public input into the development of a coordinated municipal program to commemorate the Halifax Explosion 100th Anniversary. The committee would be created with a view to providing oversight in the development of an HRM civic program, inclusive of public representation. The committee could, for example, be tasked with providing input into the development of a municipal plan, prioritizing input from members of the general public and key stakeholders, and monitoring implementation of the plan of municipal activities. The committee could, as required, form sub-committees to address aspects of the larger project, particularly where specialized technical expertise or experience would be advantageous. Representation might also be sought from external funding agencies on a project-specific basis.

- **Civic Commemorative Event**

It is anticipated that HRM's annual commemorative events in Halifax and Dartmouth would remain the central focus of the Municipality's formal recognition of the tragic loss of life, personal injury, physical devastation, and recovery.

- **Legacy Capital Projects**

There are numerous sites throughout Halifax and Dartmouth intimately associated with the Halifax Explosion that present an opportunity to officially recognize and interpret these unique locations and possibly link them in a consistent manner. The most notable of these sites is the Needham Bells Memorial. Restoration of the monument itself and improvements to its location could constitute a legacy. The advisory committee could be tasked with providing input into a proposed site design, establishing priorities, and engaging the general public and key stakeholders in support of a funding submission. A timely determination of scope of work would be necessary to allow for capital budget planning and the preparation of formal funding submissions as applicable.

- **Grants to Non-Profit Organizations**

It is anticipated that a significant number of local non-profit organizations may seek municipal grants funding in relation to the Halifax Explosion's 100th Anniversary and that some of these interests might not conform to the eligibility criteria or funding priorities of existing programs. HRM might consider (a) one-time only, special project funding to avoid compromising existing grant programs and to broaden the scope of participation, or (b) a re-allocation of a portion of an existing program's budget capacity. These discretionary grants could be used as an incentive to expand local historical accounts and/or commission original works. The participation of the local business community might also be fostered through HRM's established funding relationship with local business improvement districts. It is anticipated that if any designated funding was allocated, it would be issued in 2016 to allow for completion and presentation in time for the 2017 anniversary.

3. Proposed Next Steps

If Council elects to convene an ad hoc advisory committee to assist in planning municipal commemorative activities, the proposed terms of reference and timelines would be drafted and presented to the Community Planning & Economic Development Standing Committee. Council could, at their discretion, delegate approval of the terms of reference and the selection of committee members to the standing committee with progress reports at pre-determined intervals.

Any proposed additional grants funding or a re-allocation of funds within an existing grant program would be approved by the Grants Committee and Special Events Advisory Committee with oversight provided by the Audit & Finance Standing Committee as applicable.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None. With three (3) fiscal years in which to plan, the budgetary implications can be developed should any specific municipal projects be identified, confirmed and approved by Regional Council. Any financial implications with respect to capital projects, civic and community events, or grants to non-profit organizations would require Council's approval through the annual budget process.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The type and extent of community engagement would be determined by the option(s), or an alternative, advanced by Regional Council.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

None.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Regional Council may choose to approve establishment of a non-profit society to plan for the commemoration of the 100th Anniversary of the Halifax Explosion. This is not recommended for the reasons outlined in the report.
2. Regional Council may choose to not delegate the approval of the terms of reference to the Community Planning & Economic Development Standing Committee. This is not recommended as the scope of the committee's work aligns with the mandate of the committee.
3. Regional Council may choose to not establish an ad hoc advisory committee to plan the commemoration of the 100th Anniversary of the Halifax Explosion. This is not recommended as the anniversary is a significant milestone.

ATTACHMENTS

None.

A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/council/agendasc/cagenda.html> then choose the appropriate meeting date, or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 490-4210, or Fax 490-4208.

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